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The People's Commune

By CHENG HUEHCHIA

HONGKONG (AP)—A pre-dept-shattering social experiment is going on in Red China with the introduction of so-called "people's communes."

Peiping's policy-makers, apparently satisfied with the results of the first stage of their experiment, are about to launch the movement on a nationwide scale.

The Chinese Communist press, led by the official People's Daily is giving frontpage prominence to the movement.

The Communists describe the people's communes as "the best form for accelerating socialist construction and passing transition from socialism to communism."

Communist propaganda mills are underlining the theme that the people's communes "will become the basic social units in Communist society."

The importance attached to the "bloodless revolution" is illustrated by the People's Daily's bannerline treatment given to special reports on the movement. A sample headline: "Millions of peasants going steadily toward communism."

What is a people's commune? It is a super Communist co-operative in which individualism is totally uprooted and replaced by a system of "equal share of fruits of labor."

A people's commune embraces not only peasantry but also the entire labor force of the country, including tradesmen, and school teachers. Peasantry, however, forms the backbone of the communes inasmuch as an estimated 600 million of Red China's 630 million are farmers.

It will eventually become the ultimate Communist form of collective life.

The Peiping regime, according to the Communist press, hopes to establish some 80,000 regional people's communes by

merging 730,000 existing co-ops throughout the China continent. The deadline for completion of the program is set for 1960.

How will the Chinese masses react to the people's communes designed to further tighten regimentation of life?

Only time will tell, but one thing is certain: the peasants are in for more hardships and for a life deprived of individualism almost in its entirety.

The typical farmer and his spouse will have to spend all available working hours in back-breaking chores for their particular commune. No private ownership is countenanced in this type of commune.

Each commune is to provide community kitchens operated by female members, public bathhouses, tailorsshops, barber-shops, homes for the aged, public children's nurseries. The communes, in short, eliminate housekeeping and family life.

The family system has been held inviolate by the Chinese since time immemorial. It is, therefore, logical to assume that the average peasant on the mainland will not take too kindly toward any sudden change in his mode of life.

The experiment in people's communes, if carried out successfully, would become Red China's major milestone in its relentless march toward total collectivism. It would be an achievement unparalleled in the Communist world since Marxists reared its head in Russia some 40 years ago.

While Soviet Russia is going through a period of farm mechanization, Red China apparently is determined to realize the ultimate goal of Marxism by bypassing the Soviet method, presumably because it will take too long to modernize its agrarian social structure.

The people's communes were first established on a trial basis early this year in certain areas in Hopei, Heilungkiang, Kirin, Kansu, and in some autonomous minority regions in Inner Mongolia and Kwangsi.

The experiment on a provincial scale was started in Honan, Red China's leading wheat-producing province. By the end of July all of the 6,876 farm co-ops in the Hsinyang area in Honan were merged into 208 people's communes with 8,000 peasant households in each commune on the average. By the end of August the movement was to have embraced the entire province.

Reports indicate Red China is to launch the new movement on a nationwide basis after the fall harvest.